MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Manchester City Council

Our Children Sufficiency Strategy

2022 – 27

‘A child who is looked after by the Council or a care leaver has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a responsible and good parent’.

Introduction

Our Manchester Strategy places children and young people at the heart of its vision

Our Manchester, Our Children's and Young People Plan, cannot be underestimated when it comes to children in our care and our care leavers. As Corporate Parents, we consider children in our care and our care leavers as Our Manchester child. We are proud of Our Manchester Children and continue to be amazed by their skills and talents. Our sufficiency duty is delivered across all services, through the development of family hubs and targeted early help

Our role as Corporate Parent is to ensure Our Manchester Children are safe, healthy, happy and enabled to have successful futures; confident and prepared for adult life. The commitment to Our Manchester Children is something that all providers for our children must demonstrate. Our Children should be cared for in homes not placements. They should have a sense of belonging, feel safe and secure, through developing trusting relationships with their care givers and be connected to people and places that matter to them.

Our Children Sufficiency Strategy provides our strategic aims and outcomes to ensuring that we have the right homes, in the right place, at the right time.

What is Placement sufficiency?

Local Authorities have a responsibility under the Sufficiency Duty within the Children's Act 1989, to ensure that they have enough provision to meet the needs of their children and young people who are looked after. To achieve this Manchester will work in partnership with young people, their families, providers and partner agencies to ensure that there is a robust choice of accommodation. The duty to cooperate underpins our role as Corporate Parents, and applies to all partners. That services are based on the ‘if this were my child’ principle and that starts by making sure young people have a safe and stable place to live, that they are economically sound; with the opportunity and support to be successful.

In September 2020, Manchester published our 2020 – 22 Our Children’s Sufficiency Strategy developing the right services at the right time in the right place. Alongside the Strategy we published our Commissioning Behaviours and Principles which embedded our approach towards ethical and trusted providers sharing how we plan to work together to achieve better outcomes for our children. This 2022 strategy continue to embed the developed practice, sustaining and progressing the partnership approach to deliver innovate models of accommodation. This will be delivered through the:

- Continued joint Commissioning approaches, funding and governance across health, children and adults social care and public health. Ensuring we are not duplicating resource but adding value, planning together and developing co-production models of commissioning
- Commissioning additional short breaks, overnight respite and shared care models
- Implementation of Take a breath, Staying Close, Mockingbird and evidence led models of practice
- Transparent and improved financial oversight and payment systems
- Review of what is working well; actively decommissioning models and services which are not performing

- Implementation of SEND and Independent Review of Children Social Care Review Recommendations, regional contract and sufficiency models
- Jointly commissioning transition accommodation for young people with mental health, learning disability and/or autism

Voice of Children and Young People

Children and young people have told us, through surveys and engagement sessions:

- Listen more, do what you say, act don't just write it down
- Seeing and keeping in touch with family and friends – don't see them enough
- Being involved in plans about us. Providing plans in a way that is accessible
- See you MORE and stop changing staff, stop staff leaving
- More control of my life – always have to ask permission
- Be creative, think about how things can be done

Our Aim

The aim of the 2022 – 27 Strategy is to continue to embed the practice developed and to innovate models of accommodation to ensure we are maximising its use for the right children. We will ensure our children are cared for by skilled and talented people who are passionate about our children, have the right home, in the right place at the right time enabling them to be safe, happy, successful and healthy by:

- Achieving timely permanence
- Increasing the number of our children who are able to live in Manchester
- Delivering sufficient quality provision to meet the needs of all children and young people irrespective of cultural or ethnic background
- Increasing the number of our children living in both internal and externally commissioned family based care
- Increasing the number of shared care arrangements where appropriate
- Increasing our short breaks options
- Developing an increased choice of homes across Manchester with providers of choice
- Increasing the number and use of Supported Lodgings where appropriate
- Increased use of the semi-independent accommodation from 17 years
- and reduce its use for 16 years
- Increasing the housing options for Care Leavers

Our Approach

The Right Caregiver

To secure quality carers and support that meets the needs of Our Children and Young People

The Right Place

We want to ensure that all children wherever possible are able to stay in Manchester, to have quality care and accommodation and support which is value for money

The Right Time

Well planned moves that reduce unplanned endings and unplanned moves.

Partnership and Choice

Successful long-term care gives can only be achieved by working in partnership and sharing risk.

Our Manchester Behaviours

We will demonstrate Our Manchester Behaviours in everything we do

Our Children

[Data sources PNW census, 903 Return 2021/22)

- Manchester numbers of Looked After Children have reduced to 1385 of which 63% have been looked after for over 18 months.
- 52% are male and 48% are female.
- Age Profile:

Age of child	%
Under 1 year	4%
1-4 years	14%
5-9 years	17%
10-15 years	37%
Over 16 years	28%

- Ethnicity of children who were looked after at 31/03/22

Ethnicity	%
Asian	8%
Black	19%
Mixed	20%
Other	4%
White	48%
Refused / Info not available	1%

- Currently 10% of Manchester looked after children are unaccompanied asylum seekers
- The percentage of Our Children who have a special educational need and or disability (SEND) has increased to 55%
- Duration of care for children who were looked after at 31/03/22:

Duration	%
Less than 3 months	7%
3-6 months	9%
6-12 months	13%
12-18 months	8%
Over 18 months	63%

- 4% of young people who had been in placement for less than 6 months were UASC
- Placement type for children who were looked after at 31/03/2022

Placement type	%
External fostering	27%
Internal fostering	21%
Connected person	18%
Placed with parent	13%
Residential	6%
Placed for adoption	2%
Supported Accommodation / Semi-independent living	11%
Other	2%

- Placement location for children who were looked after at 31/03/2022:

Location	%
Manchester	52%
Elsewhere in Greater Manchester	37%

Elsewhere in North West (not Greater Manchester)	7%
Outside of North West	4%

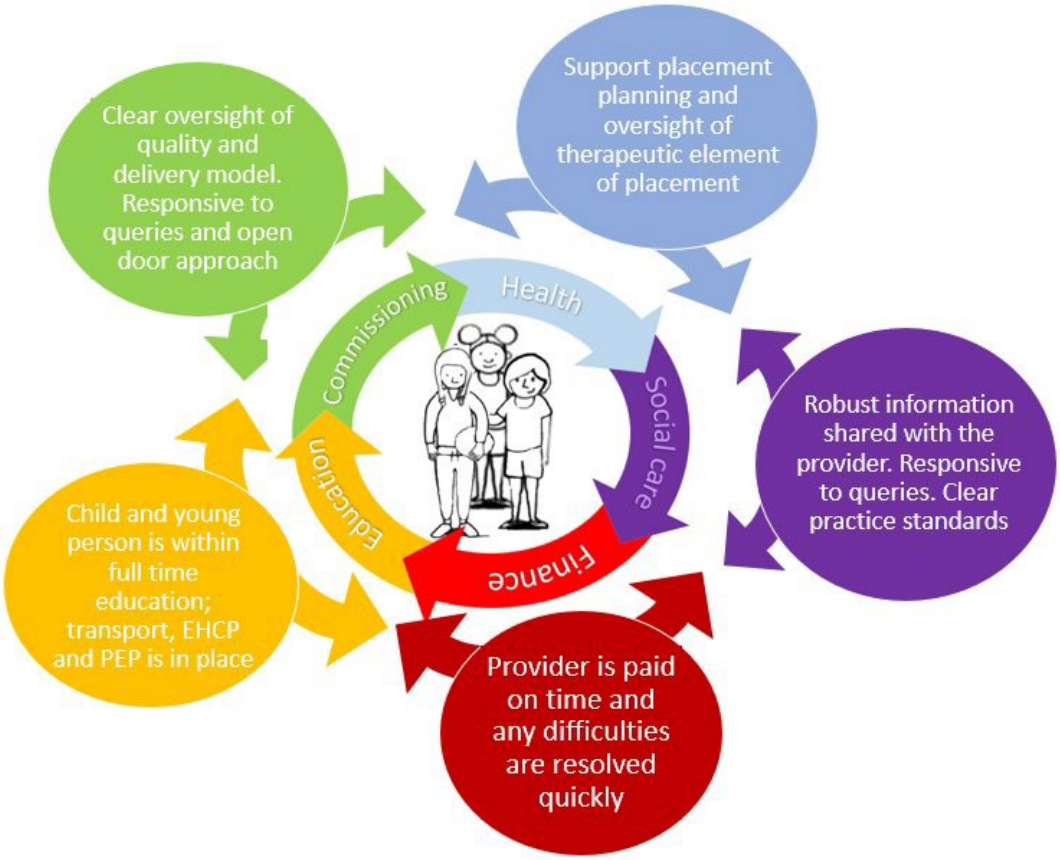
- While some of Our Children are placed out of area, the number that are within 20 miles of their home has increased.

- The number of Our Children who have had 3 or more placements has reduced in line with statistical neighbours, though the number of Our Children who have remained in a placement for 2 years or longer has decreased slightly.

An Authority of Choice – Roles and Responsibilities

In order to be an authority of choice we must:

- Have clear oversight of quality and delivery model, and be responsive to queries with an open door approach
- Support placement planning and oversight of therapeutic element of placement
- Ensure robust information is shared with the provide. Be responsive to queries and have clear practice standards
- Ensure providers are paid on time and any difficulties are resolved quickly
- Make sure that the child of young people are within full time education, with transport, EHCP and PEP in place



Commissioning Role

Sufficiency is not about regional contracts or purchasing systems. It is about relationships - collaborating and co-producing with partners and providers. We know that providers have choice in relation to who they work with, Manchester wants to be an authority of choice to ensure that we trust and know each other. We will ensure that due diligence is robust and proportionate to risk

Education Services Role

Ensuring parents and p[providers are core partners in EHCP development and review. Virtual school is a key partner having oversight. Utilising data from the virtual schools informs placement fragility. That home school transport has a key role to play.

Finance role

We know we can improve our payment process. The transition to ContrOCC has a legacy of aged debt. We are working with all providers and developing increased pace of payments with reliable payment dates.

Social care role

Manchester has continued to invest in development of the children's workforce to have stable, talented and confident practitioners. This has a positive impact through improved planning to inform timely permanency, ensuring that Social workers have the skills to deliver informed and robust assessments which translate into planned outcomes which are SMART

Health role

Ensuring the right services are available at the right time, developing plans around the child.

The Right Care Giver

We will publish clear information so all providers can contact the teams and can consult with regard to establishing new local provision.

Foster Care

- We have published a new foster care marketing, retention and recruitment strategy.
- We will develop Mockingbird to develop the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community
- We will continue to work closely with external Foster providers to maintain and increase the number of placements and to support the step across from residential to fostering.
- We are committed to enabling young people to stay with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday as part of staying put arrangements

Residential Children's Homes

- 7% of Our Children have an assessed need which is currently being met by a residential children home. To provide this Manchester commission a range of residential provision with external providers and has an in house provision

- Our aim will be to reduce further our use of residential children's homes where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and with our caregivers, work in partnership to enable successful transition to return home or step across to fostering and or independence
- We will consciously develop the right providers to deliver for our children in Manchester. This will include crisis care accommodation models.

Post 16 Accommodation

- Whilst we will increase our use of Independent living placements for 17 year olds to include stepping across from residential and fostering through the Post 16 Accommodation Hub, wehave commissioned preferred supported accommodation providers
- We have developed a range of accommodation in partnership with Manchester housing Providers to include the House Project, stepping stone accommodations and foyers to ensure young people have choice and the right support.

Supported Lodgings

- We will continue to develop and deliver an in house supported lodgings service.
- We will ensure that all 16 year olds have access to n as part of their plan when it is appropriate to do so.

Post 18 years Accommodation

- We continue to work closely to our Social housing providers. so that Care leavers who are tenancy ready, are able to obtain Band 1 on Manchester Move. This has enabled over 300 young people to move into quality local social housing with trusted landlords.
- We will continue to work with adults services to ensure that specialist accommodation needs for both mental health and learning disability are commissioned to reduce the impact of transition across services and the number of moves for a young person.

Short breaks

- We are coproducing our short breaks offer with young people and families to ensure that it continues to meet local need. This includes the short breaks ten year purchasing system.
- We are developing a local commissioned respite provision to meet the needs of our children with overnight breaks. This will reduce our demand of our of borough commissioned respite. Enabling families to remain together.

Shared Care

- We will develop our shared care provision to enable children to remain at home or with their long term foster carer as long as they are able. This will be delivered through fostering and short breaks provision

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- The number of unaccompanied Asylum seeking children (UASC) has increased in Manchester (c9% of all LAC).

- We have commissioned two block contracts with trusted providers to deliver quality support and accommodation in partnership with our social housing providers securing 80 quality accommodations and support for Our Children

The Right Support

Manchester is committed to supporting both internal and external provision with a range of support around Our Children. This will be to provide stability, support a transition of placement, a change in placement type or to return the young person home. Ensuring that we work in partnership with health and education to understand risk and develop wrap services around each young person.

Safeguarding

A multi disciplinary team approach working with parents; providing help and support to create lasting change.

- Reducing likelihood of abuse and neglect in families
- Fewer children needing to be in care or adopted
- Families becoming more resilient & developing greater confidence in their skills

Leaving Care Team, House Project and Staying Close

All Our Children are provided with a Leaving Care Practitioner from the age of 16 years, who work in partnership with social workers and providers to ensure that the Pathway Plan is accurate and SMART, continuing until 25 years.

Manchester delivers the House Project which enables young people to access peer and practitioner support to enable them to move into their forever home as early as possible. This has successfully supported 24 young people to move into their own tenancy and sustain it. Manchester is also leading on the implementation of the GM House Project Collaborative, working in partnership with 6 GM Authorities and 9 housing providers.

Staying Close is a model which provides an enhanced support package for young people leaving care. It provides an offer of move-on accommodation, alongside a package of practical and emotional support, provided by someone who they know and trust. All three approaches deliver accommodation stability, improved well being, access to employment, education & training, strong peer relationships and independent living skills

Crisis Care and Take a Breath

Although children in care constitute only 0.6% of the child population in England, they account for a disproportionate 10% of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The GM ICB have developed a range of support services to wrap around our children. These include the home intensive treatment teams, key workers, parachute teams, and jointly funding Take a breath accommodation models.

These services will ensure we have a quality accommodation model which can meet the needs of our most complex young people when they need it most. It will enable young people to have greater choice for their move on accommodation, received an integrated delivery model to ensure we understand their needs and enable the young person to achieve stability in their future accommodation.

Joint Commissioning

Children's Joint Commissioning will improve the outcomes of the Citizens in Manchester through collaborative commissioning activity working across the Council, NHS commissioners, partner agencies and communities to ensure maximisation of existing resources. This means that:

- Parents'/carers' and children's/young people's views contribute to and influence strategic commissioning.
- There is an excellent local offer, services, processes and pathways, understood and accessible to all, leading to improved life outcomes.
- Identified need of children and young people are met through joint commissioning activity where appropriate in order to improve their experience and health, social care and
- educational outcomes
- There is Improved use of resources, outcomes and standards across all commissioned services

Virtual School

The Manchester Virtual School is a team of dedicated professionals who support Looked After Children, Care Leavers and Young People supported by the Manchester Youth Justice Service to succeed in education, employment and training (EET) by working as the lead education advocate for the Our Children. The team monitor attendance, attainment and achievement to ensure that educational success is a top priority in care.

The Right Place

Our Children will be supported to live in their communities, connected to people and places that matter to them.

60% of Our Children remain within Manchester, and we are increasing the number of Our Children who remain within 20 miles of their home. Where Our Children have to live outside of Manchester we will work closely with the Provider and the Host Local Authority to ensure that they are able to meet Our Children's needs. We know that there are three main cohorts of Our Children who experience difficulties finding the right carers close to home These are Our Children who have:

- A long term disability
- A Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) who present with difficult challenges due to their experiences
- Post adoption disruption

Our aim through this Strategy is to ensure that where it is safe and appropriate to do so, we will provide homes for Our Children close to home. Where Our Children are placed at a distance, we will ensure that there is a repatriation plan developed in partnership with our children and the providers to enable their return as soon as practically possible

Strategic Direction

The Sufficiency Strategy does not work on its own, it has significant interdependences across a number of strategies listed below. Key Strategies are our Inclusion Strategy, the new legislation and scope from the Independent Social Care Review and the SEND Green paper will shape further editions.

- Our Manchester Strategy- Forward to 2025, Reviewed annually
- Children and Young People's Plan 2020 - 2024
- Commissioning Behaviours and Principles 2020
- SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy 2020 -2023
- Manchester's Promoting Inclusion & Preventing Exclusion Strategy 2019 – 2022
- Our Manchester youth offer strategy 2020 – 2023
- The Greater Manchester i-THRIVE (GM i-THRIVE) and Manchester THRIVE programmes
- Manchester Family Poverty Strategy 2017-2022
- Manchester's Young Carers' Strategy 2017 - 2019

Legal Context

The local authority's duty in Section 22G has to be understood in the context of their duty in Section 22C of the 1989 Act. In accordance with Section 22C(5), the overriding factor is that the placement must be the most appropriate placement available.

Next, the local authority must give preference to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster parent (Section 22C(7)(a). Failing that, the local authority must, so far as reasonably practicable, in all circumstances find a placement that:

- Is near the child's home (Section 22C (8) (a)
- Does not disrupt the child's education or training (Section 22C(8)(b)
- Enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling (Section 22C(8)(c)
- Where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child (Section 22C (8) (d)
- Is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable (Section 22C(9)

When the local authority takes steps to secure accommodation, a local authority should not assume that it is 'not reasonably practicable' to secure accommodation simply because it is difficult to do so or because they do not have the resources to do so. Any constraining factors should not be taken as permanent constraints on the local authority's requirements to comply with the Sufficiency Duty.

- The term 'looked after' refers under the 1989 Act to all children and young people being looked after by a local authority who are:
- Subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order (under Section 31 and 38 of the 1989 Act)
- Placed or authorised to be placed with prospective adopters by a local authority (Section 18(3) of the 2002 Act
- Voluntarily accommodated (Under Section 20 of the 1989 Act) including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Where children are accommodated under this provision parental responsibility remains with the parents
- Those who are subject to a Court Order with Residence requirements (for example Secure Remand or Remand to Local Authority accommodation in accordance with Section 21 of the 1989 Act).